



Dynamics of language attitudes towards regional language preservation in the constellation of multiculturalism and IKN development

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Abstract

Purpose - This study aims to examine the language attitudes of the Balikpapan community toward regional languages and to explore how these attitudes may influence regional identity and tourism development in the context of the new capital city (IKN) expansion.

Methodology/Design/Approach - A quantitative approach was employed, collecting survey data from 384 respondents with a 5% margin of error. Multiple factors influencing language attitudes—environmental, instructional (Indonesian as the language of instruction), family, media, and institutional factors—were analyzed using significance testing to determine their predictive effects.

Findings - The results show that environmental factors (Sig. = 0.000) and media/institutional factors (Sig. = 0.029) exert significant positive effects on regional language attitudes. Conversely, the use of Indonesian as a language of instruction (Sig. = 0.012) has a significant negative effect. Family influence (Sig. = 0.533), although theoretically assumed to be the strongest factor, shows no significant impact in shaping respondents' attitudes. Overall, the Balikpapan community demonstrates attitudes toward regional languages that could be strengthened through targeted interventions such as education-based initiatives, regional language promotion, enhanced family engagement, and the creation of language-friendly public spaces.

Originality/Value - This study contributes novel empirical evidence on the sociolinguistic dynamics of a rapidly developing urban area located near the emerging national capital. It highlights how regional language attitudes intersect with cultural identity and tourism development, offering practical insights for policymakers seeking to preserve linguistic heritage while promoting culturally grounded tourism in the era of IKN development.

Keywords: Language Attitudes, Balikpapan, Capital City Relocation (IKN), Tourism

Introduction

The growth of a city typically occurs in accordance with the times (D. Alexander, 2008; Wang et al., 2024). The growth of Balikpapan accelerated after the implementation of the IKN development project. In accordance with one of its goals, to be a symbol of identity and representation of cultural diversity (President of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022), the IKN clearly increases diversity in surrounding cities such as Balikpapan. Within three years (2021-2024), 60,670 immigrants entered Balikpapan as the IKN project progressed (Kullah, 2024). From January to April 2025, the number of immigrants increased by 4,979, excluding non-permanent residents (H. Alexander, 2025). The increase in population, mainly due to immigration rather than births, certainly adds to the diversity in Balikpapan. Balikpapan is a city with accommodates individuals from various ethnic groups, including Javanese, Bugis, Banjar, Kutai, Paser, and Dayak (Website Management Team,

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2025). As the population grows, so does the diversity (Firdaus et al., 2024). Diversity can shape societal attitudes and perspectives concerning the significance of a language. This happens because language is also a way to show who you are. This indicates that language serves as a mechanism for the internalization of values (Neina et al., 2023). Moreover, awareness of preserving local identity serves as a concrete indication of community commitment to its local identity, which can impact tourism attractiveness, especially in the cultural domain. Pearce and Williams assert that in contemporary society, authenticity and uniqueness are coveted in tourism (Salim et al., 2012). Symbols of local identity, such as the regional language, show how authentic or unique a region is. The ecolinguistic diversity of East Kalimantan is reflected in the 16 regional languages used (Admin, 2023). These regional languages, such as Bugis and Banjar, influence the Indonesian language in Balikpapan. The interplay between languages and the rate of migration can also obscure the identity of regional languages (Thomason, Sarah G.; Kaufman, 1988) (Mühlhäusler, 1986). In this regard, the regional government is tasked with promoting and maintaining regional languages (Disdikbud Balikpapan, 2023). Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a study of community language attitudes to examine linguistic interactions (the factors that influence them) with the sustainability or existence of regional languages along with the development of the new capital city (IKN), as well as to understand the importance of preserving local/regional identity as a tourism asset.

Method

In finding the condition of language attitudes and influencing factors in the midst of the modernity of the city of Balikpapan, this research was carried out with a qualitative and quantitative approach. The research population is the people of Balikpapan. The population of Balikpapan is 703,611 (BPS Balikpapan City, 2024). If calculated according to the Krejcie & Morgan formula with a margin of error of 5%, the research sample totaled 384 people. To obtain the condition of language attitude, a descriptive statistical test was carried out. Then, in finding the factors that affect language attitudes, multiple linear regression tests were performed. The results of the statistical test were then integrated with field observations and literature studies. The research stage was carried out by sending a questionnaire consisting of:

Table 1. Operationalisation of Research Variables on the Regional Language Attitudes of the Balikpapan Community

Variable	Variable Categories			
Independent	X1	Environmental factors	Influencing Factors	Social and social environment
	X2	Indonesian Language as a Medium of Communication		Frequency and context of Indonesian use
	X3	Family Factor		Patterns of communication and language transmission between generations
	X4	Media and Institution Factors		Exposure of regional languages in the media and social institutions
Dependent	Y1	Cognitive	Language attitudes	Knowledge, feelings, and tendencies in the use of regional languages
	Y2	Affective		
	Y3	Behaviour		

Source: Author field work, 2025

The study used Fishman's theory in classifying language attitudes and the factors that influence them. Then, it is related to the shift in regional languages in Balikpapan with the Crystal theory. The collaboration of the two theories and juxtaposed with quantitative data resulted in recommendations for language defense models that are appropriate to the research area based on the results of statistical tests.

Findings and discussion

Based on descriptive statistical tests, the Environmental variable received the highest average score, which was 24.30 out of 30. On the other hand, the Media and Institution variables received the lowest score, which was 10.98. This means that the research respondents represent the attitude of the Balikpapan people towards the language, which tends to be positive towards the use and preservation of regional languages. Even though it is situated in a multicultural environment, it should be emphasized that the regional language used is the one spoken by the tribe of each respondent.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistical Test Output

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Environmental factors	384	6.00	30.00	24.3021	3.64443
Indonesian Language as a Medium of Communication	384	4.00	20.00	16.3307	2.71299
Family Factor	384	4.00	20.00	13.3620	3.02327
Media and Institution Factors	384	3.00	15.00	10.9844	2.25636
Language Attitudes	384	9.00	45.00	34.6016	5.71655
Valid N (listwise)	384				

Source: Researcher’s data processing using SPSS 25 (2025)

After obtaining the language attitude value, multiple linear regression analysis was carried out between the independent variables (X1-X4) and the Cognitive (Y1), Affective (Y2), and Behavioral (Y3) language attitude variables

Table 3. Model 1 Regression Results for Predictors of Cognitive Language Attitude (Y1)

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.726 ^a	.527	.522	1.49560

a. Predictors: (Constant), Media and Institutional Factor, Indonesian Language as a Medium of Communication, Family Factor, Environmental Factor

ANOVA^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	942.900	4	235.725	105.384	.000 ^b
Residual	847.756	379	2.237		
Total	1790.656	383			

a. Dependent Variable: Cognitive Language Attitude; b. Predictors: (Constant), Media and Institutional Factor, Indonesian Language as a Medium of Communication, Family Factor, Environmental Factor. Source: Researcher’s data processing using SPSS 25 (2025)

As indicated in Table 3, the regression model accounts for 52.7% of the variation in cognitive language attitude ($R^2 = 0.527$). The total model is significant ($F = 105.384, p < 0.001$), which means that the predictors significantly affect language attitudes from the cognitive aspect.

Table 4. Model 2 Regression Results for Predictors of Cognitive Language Attitude (Y2)

ANOVA^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	883.595	4	220.899	81.687	.000 ^b
Residual	1024.895	379	2.704		
Total	1908.490	383			

a. Dependent Variable: Affective Language Attitude; b. Predictors: (Constant), Media and Institutional Factor, Indonesian Language as a Medium of Communication, Family Factor, Environmental Factor. Source: Author field work, 2025

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	2.147	.626	—	3.428	.001
Environmental Factor	.419	.032	.684	13.223	.000
Indonesian Language as a Medium of Communication	-.066	.042	-.080	-1.547	.123
Family Factor	-.066	.033	-.089	-1.989	.047
Media and Institutional Factor	.128	.047	.130	2.714	.007

a. Dependent Variable: Affective Language Attitude. Source: Researcher’s data processing using SPSS 25 (2025)

The findings of the ANOVA show that the difference is significant. = 0.000 (≤ 0.05). At the same time, all independent variables have a big impact on Language-Affective Attitude. Based on the T-test results, the use of Indonesian Language as a Medium of Communication did not significantly influence the linguistic attitude within the Affective component.

Table 5. Model 3 Regression Results for Predictors of Cognitive Language Attitude (Y3)

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	513.744	4	128.436	28.937	.000 ^b
Residual	1682.191	379	4.438		
Total	2195.935	383			

a. Dependent Variable: Behavioural Language Attitude; b. Predictors: (Constant), Media and Institutional Factor, Indonesian Language as a Medium of Communication, Family Factor, Environmental Factor. Source: Author field work, 2025

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	4.214	.802	—	5.252	.000
Environmental Factor	.372	.041	.566	9.167	.000
Indonesian Language as a Medium of Communication	-.273	.054	-.310	-5.037	.000
Family Factor	.059	.042	.095	1.395	.164
Media and Institutional Factor	.082	.061	.147	1.355	.176

a. Dependent Variable: Behavioural Language Attitude. Source: Researcher’s data processing using SPSS 25 (2025)

Simultaneously, the free variable has a significant effect on language attitudes and behavioural aspects. However, partially (UJI-T), only the variables of Environment and Indonesian Language as a Medium of Communication have significant significance.

The results of the descriptive statistical test indicate that environmental factors are the primary influences on a person's language attitude. The environment referred to in the study is their interaction and awareness with people from other tribes and regions, who share different languages, in daily life. Strong interaction supports the use of strong regional languages. The use of strong regional discussions fosters solidarity and helps strengthen regional identity (Fishman, 1997). The use of Indonesian as the primary medium of daily communication has a significant influence on shaping people's language attitudes. The dominance of the Indonesian language in formal environments affects the function of regional languages, particularly when the dominant language is also used in informal settings.

On the other hand, the family factor had a moderate restriction, with an average score of 13.36. This illustrates that, although efforts are made to maintain the regional language, the results are not ideal. As a result, the existence and preservation of regional languages for the next generation tends to weaken. Another factor that affects language attitudes is the media and institutions, especially government policies. The public

considers the role of the media and institutions to be relatively high in shaping language attitudes. This aligns with Fishman's assertion that the government is committed to enhancing the role of regional languages in the public sphere and national media (Fishman, 1997). Thus, based on the determination of the four variables (factors), it is known that the people of Balikpapan have a positive language attitude towards regional languages. This means that regional languages are still used and maintained on a particular scale.

Factors that affect changes in people's language attitudes in the context of IKN development

Language evolves and even changes in response to the changes that occur among its speakers. The language is highly dynamic, adapting to changing conditions and needs (Steels & Szathmáry, 2018). The condition of a prosperous city like Balikpapan automatically directs people to switch from the previous language (or even language habits) of their respective cities or tribes to the local system/customs, or way of speaking. Based on the data, the language shift of the Balikpapan people is classified into five categories, which are referred to from the theory of the Crystal language shift as follows.

Global language dominance

The dominant language influence, in the context of this study, is the Indonesian language. Indonesian dominates almost all formal public sectors, such as government institutions, employment, education, and even interactions in public places. This results in a smaller space for the use of regional languages. Government policies that have not strengthened the use of regional languages have also affected the shift in the regional language of the community. The results of the descriptive statistical test indicate that the high use of Indonesian in the home environment aligns with the fact that urban development, which expands the dominance of the national language, accelerates the shift of regional languages in people's lives. This shift, from a tourism point of view, disguises the uniqueness of local culture where local nuances do not feel thick because the local people become no different from (domestic) immigrants due to the use of the same language.

Urbanisation or migration

IKN accelerates the mobility and growth of the city of Balikpapan, making it a destination city for immigrants. The population movement accelerated the language shift. High mobility reduces the opportunity to use regional languages in daily life (Léger et al., 1994). The growth of the city of Balikpapan increases migration flows and gradually increases inter-ethnic individual interaction. This interaction reduces the possibility of using the language of each region, even in daily life. However, on the other hand, this can result in a unique use of language in Balikpapan. The fact that Balikpapan is a pluralistic city requires efficiency in cross-ethnic communication, and a mixture of accents and intonations naturally produces new characteristics, such as the formation of an urban language or a new linguistic identity.

Lack of intergenerational transmission

Based on descriptive statistical tests, language attitudes are moderately influenced by family factors. This means that the defence of regional languages in the family environment has not been maximized. The low influence of the family in maintaining the regional language is one key factor contributing to the language shift (Crystal, 2000). The dominance of the Indonesian language at home weakens children's desire to master their local language. One of the factors that determines the percentage of regional discussion in the family environment is whether the ethnic backgrounds of the father and mother are the same. More people moving, growing throughout time, and marrying people from other regions make it even less likely that regional languages would survive. This shows that people's identities are changing, especially among young people, who are moving away from their ethnic identities and toward a mixed urban identity. On the one hand, this does open up opportunities for new cultural identities that can be introduced into local "uniqueness", but from this aspect of language, it is a big challenge to prevent the total loss of regional identity over a long period of time.

Stigma

In the case of research on the attitude towards the regional language of the Balikpapan community, it was not studied in depth whether there is a certain stigma or shame associated with the use of regional languages. However, the average acknowledgement of statements related to "Indonesian language is more polite and appropriate to be used in daily life" received an average score of 3.9. This means that the absolute use of Indonesian in cross-ethnic communication has an impact on the local language attitude of the community.

The role of educational institutions or local media

The role of educational institutions or local media in Balikpapan has not been maximally supportive of the use and defence of regional languages. Learning to discuss the region in Balikpapan is also uneven and inconsistent. In keeping pace with developments due to the development of the IKN, it is appropriate for the government to share a focus on cultural preservation, including regional languages (Crystal, 2000).

Efforts to Maintain the Existence of Regional Languages in Balikpapan in the Era of IKN Development

The condition of language shift in the context of regional languages amidst urban growth is inevitable. Many factors contribute to this, including the lack of attention to regional languages and the urgency of mastering foreign languages. However, all parties are making specific efforts to slow down the shift or strengthen the use of regional languages. Based on the Crystal defence model, the role of the community that can be carried out to help the local language administration in Balikpapan is as follows: (1) Strengthening the promotion and learning of regional languages in formal and non-formal education environments. Educational institutions have the capacity and privilege to reintroduce regional languages to generations who may be at risk of forgetting them. Mass media, including social media, also have a significant influence in indirectly instilling the value and knowledge of regional languages in each individual. Thus, it can increase the pride of the community, especially the younger generation, in maintaining the symbol of ethnic heritage. Strengthening regional languages through education and digital promotion is an example of an approach to local tourism development that is integrated in economic activities so that it not only lives as a symbol, but also builds local identity, and is also in the social and economic practices of the local community (Tuktamyshova & Kirillova, 2023); (2) Creation of local public spaces that are friendly to regional languages. The use of regional languages as a companion language in information boards, appeals in public spaces, formal interactions (such as regional language greetings), and regional festivals can increase the community's familiarity with the dominant regional language in their respective regions. Thus, it has the potential to aid in the defence of regional languages. If the representation of regional languages does not appear visually prominent in public spaces, the opportunity to utilise regional languages as a tourism asset suggests that their potential as a symbol of tourism identity has not been fully maximised (Moriarty, 2015); and (3) Increasing the role of families in transferring knowledge of regional languages. In the study, it was found that family caregivers had a moderate average compared to other factors that affect language attitudes. This means that the family plays a role in preserving the regional language, but it has not been as active in increasing its dominance in the broader scope.

Conclusion

The people of Balikpapan are aware that an increasing number of immigrants are exposing them to the use of diverse regional languages. Interacting with people from various ethnicities can make it difficult for them to use their local language. Coupled with the presence of the IKN project, regional languages cannot be the leading choice in communication.

The family plays a role in preserving the regional discussion. However, this study found that families have not transmitted regional languages optimally. Although symbolically, regional languages can be known to strengthen solidarity, the use of regional languages in the home environment, in daily life, tends to decrease, so that the motivation to inherit regional languages decreases due to changes in communication patterns.

Regional languages have positive potential in regional tourism development. When people have an awareness and emotional connection to their local identity, the opportunity to preserve local cultural

traditions and practices becomes greater, and the "snowball" effect strengthens authentic tourism experiences. From a tourism perspective, this can contribute to the sustainability of preserving regional languages. So, this is a mutual connection.

In the context of IKN development, regional development has a tangible impact on the dynamics of language attitudes. The government must wisely integrate specific policies in maintaining the regional value of Balikpapan. Especially, Balikpapan's, as the gateway to the IKN, must have a cultural representation that is not only a formality, but one that lives naturally in the daily life of the community. Thus, regional languages are not only a symbol of identity, but also a capital for cultural and tourism development.

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Not applicable.

Consent for publication

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The data supporting the findings of this study are available upon request.

Competing interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding this work.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies

During the preparation of this work the author used Grammarly in order to correct spelling mistakes and help me make better sentences. After using this tool/service, the author reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the published article.

Author contributions

LS Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – Original Draft, Supervision. RR Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Review & Editing. AG Investigation, Resources, Validation. TRN Methodology, Visualization, Software. FRPS Data Curation, Writing – Review & Editing, Project Administration.

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